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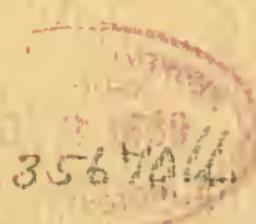
A LOVER'S REVERY

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ON NEW YEAR'S EVE.

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A POEM,



BY

HENRY LINDEN.

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.,

1889.



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HENRY LINDEN.

A LOVER'S REVERY

—ON—

NEW YEAR'S EVE.

One New Year's eve, beside a flickering fire,
Alone I sat to see the year expire.
Of all the past that had been foes to me
This year had been my bitterest enemy.
And, so, I 'waited his end without a sigh—
Glad that the cruel tyrant soon must die.
For, even now, he showed his vengeful spite,
Although his soul was soon to take its flight;
For he had raised the most tempestuous weather;
From every side he had summoned his hosts together,
And was driving his piercing storm-winds hither and thither,
So that the dreary forests sighed and moaned,
And the rafters in the housetops creaked and groaned;
And, though I was safe from the raw and biting air,
Reclining in my room on my easy chair,

Unconsciously the glowing grate I stirred
Whene'er the storm-winds past the windows whirred.

And as I waited thus that lonely night
Without a single friend to cheer my sight,
Except a cheerful-looking bowl of punch,
That stood by me with friendship true and staunch,
I dreamily bethought me of that saying
That, on the clock stroke, when the year is dying,
If a bachelor behold a maiden's face,
Their union shall, within a year take place.
But I had as little hope as superstition;
Renewed defeat had dulled my young ambition.
And, so, I tried to banish from my mind
The loved one I had long ago resigned.

Ah, my poor heart! but she was heavenly fair!
A soul for loving tenderness, most rare;
An eye unto the azure sky akin,
Reflecting the beauty of the soul within;
A smooth, transparent, rosy-tinted cheek,
That seemed of health and purity to speak,
And showed such lovely dimples, whene'er she'd smile
The coldest lover's heart they would beguile.
And, O, to think of those red, cherry lips,
So delicately shaped, like fairy tips,
Which, when she drew apart, revealed beneath
Two rows of small and charming, pearl-white teeth.

And, then, such golden locks of waving hair!
In short—fond nature did not seem to spare
Aught that could make her features or complexion
Approach the very acme of perfection.

But cruel fate had separated us
Without good cause, yet it seemed destined thus;
For cold parental wisdom made objection
To our ardent, mutual affection.—

Alas, for that poor wight who vainly loves!
Purposeless through this weary world he roves,
Finding no joy in fortune or in fame;
Success and failure to him are all the same.
For, even if his life successful prove,
'Twill only seem more vain without his love.
What can he do but wander on alone,
Stifling his heart's throes till it turn to stone!—

But painful thoughts like these I could not bear,
And, so, I settled back in my easy chair
To see if pitying sleep would not impart
A brighter tone to my despondent heart.
And, soon, a spirit of drowsiness came o'er me,
And a strange and wondrous scene arose before me,
Which to describe and rightly to relate
I must confess my powers inadequate.

Out of the blueish flames of the glowing grate
A hundred midgets seemed to emanate,

And dance before my much bewildered eyes,
Flashing and sparkling like gaudy fire-flies.
And, here, weird fairies, in a mongrel train,
Crowded upon my thoroughly puzzled brain.
And troops of beings that I never could name
Tripped gaily round the fire's fitful flame.

And, as I gazed, in mute amazement lost,
Before my wondering eyes there suddenly crossed—
Though how or where he entered I could not tell—
A person whom I knew, alas, too well.

His form was bent and shrivelled, though not with age,
But rather from ungovernable rage.
For he had hardly ceased throughout his life
From keeping up an endless, fiendish strife.
Thrice hateful for the evils he had done me
E'er since his cruel storms had burst upon me,
A hideous object was he to behold,
Shambling along and shivering from the cold,
And clutching tightly in his nervous hand
A crooked, curious stick, his magic wand,
By means of which he governed wind and wave
And destined men to glory or the grave.
Need I say it was th' old year, my heartless foe,
Who failed not now his last respects to show.
And well I knew he did not visit me
Either in kindness or in charity;

But o'er my wretched plight and misery
He came to gloat and triumph with fiendish glee.
"Aha! old friend?" he said, in a creaky tone,
"I could not bear to leave you all alone;
And, so, I've come to be a comrade boon.
And I find I've come not a bit too soon;
For I have just found out your little scheme
Of indulging in a pleasant New Year's dream,
And thus secure a lovely bride next year.
Ha, ha! my friend", he added with a sneer,
"I'll take good care that a nice old hag you'll see;
For which last kindness still gives thanks to me."
And, when I slightly frowned, as thus he chaffed,
His small eyes sparkled and he grimly laughed.
But I had long been used to his cynical ways,
For I had known him in his cruellest days,
And to his jeers had learned to pay no heed,
Though inwardly my heart the while should bleed.

At last with taunting me he seemed to tire;
And, feeling cold, moved closer to the fire.
And, now, my attention was aroused again
By the lively movements of the fairy train.
Unnoticed by him, about his form they hovered
Until with countless midgets he was covered;
And round about his ugly, hideous form
Like sparks of flashing fire they did swarm;

Until he was covered so I scarcely knew him;
When, quicker than it takes me to narrate,
Unitedly they dashed against, and threw him,
With sudden shock, upon the glowing grate!
As from dry tinder, when with oil immersed,
Forth from his prostrate body the white flames burst;
And, spreading o'er him, he was quickly wreathed
In a mass of sinuous flames, that crackled and seethed.

Three times he tried to rise, but all in vain,
The mischievous fairies hurled him back again;
Then danced about the grate triumphantly,
And, by their gestures wild, proclaimed their glee.
Till, finally, with a sudden twinge and throe,
He uttered a most unearthly cry of woe;
So shrill and ghastly that it made me start
And sent an awful shudder to my heart.
Nor, after that, did he attempt to rise;
But, sinking backward, fixed on me his eyes,
Which glowered and glared like livid balls of fire,
Though not from heat, but from malignant ire;
Like the protruding eyes of a venomous snake,
To look at which will make the boldest quake.
But, since I knew his end was drawing near,
I felt I had no reason now to fear.
And, as I saw him gradually burn
And making vain attempts to rise, or turn,

I could not, e'en if prudence bade, restrain
A sense of grim enjoyment and delight
To see his painful, pitiable plight,
And watch him writhe in misery and pain.

But, now, as the clock began to strike the hour
That would forever take from him his power,
The flames, receding, fatuously fizzled
And o'er his charred and shrunken carcass sizzled;
His eyes began unsteadily to flare,
Abating slowly their malignant glare;
When, just as the noisy clock had struck its last,
The band of fairies up the chimney passed;
And, like a flash, where, but a moment back,
Had lain the old year's corpse, all charred and black,
There now appeared, as in a hazy cloud,
Enveloped in a silvery, silken shroud,
What was to me the dearest, sweetest vision,
Recalling to life old hopes of love Elysian;
For, there, in all her loveliness, she stood
Whom I so long and hopelessly had wooed.
At first my eyesight was completely dazed;

Then, rousing myself, bewildered and astonished,
Into her soulful eyes I fondly gazed;
But for a moment only — and she vanished!
Amazed I looked about me and my eyes
Soon opened wide with anguish and surprise.

For, there, upon the coals, all crisp and charred
Lay what was left of my only Christmas card!

A little while I was filled with deep chagrin;
But hope soon rose triumphantly again.
For the bright, sweet vision of that old loved face
Brought back my youthful hopes to their old place.
And, though I may not say I'm superstitious,
My best and truest friends could never wish us
A better omen.

Ere that year had run
E'en half its course, my love and I were one!



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